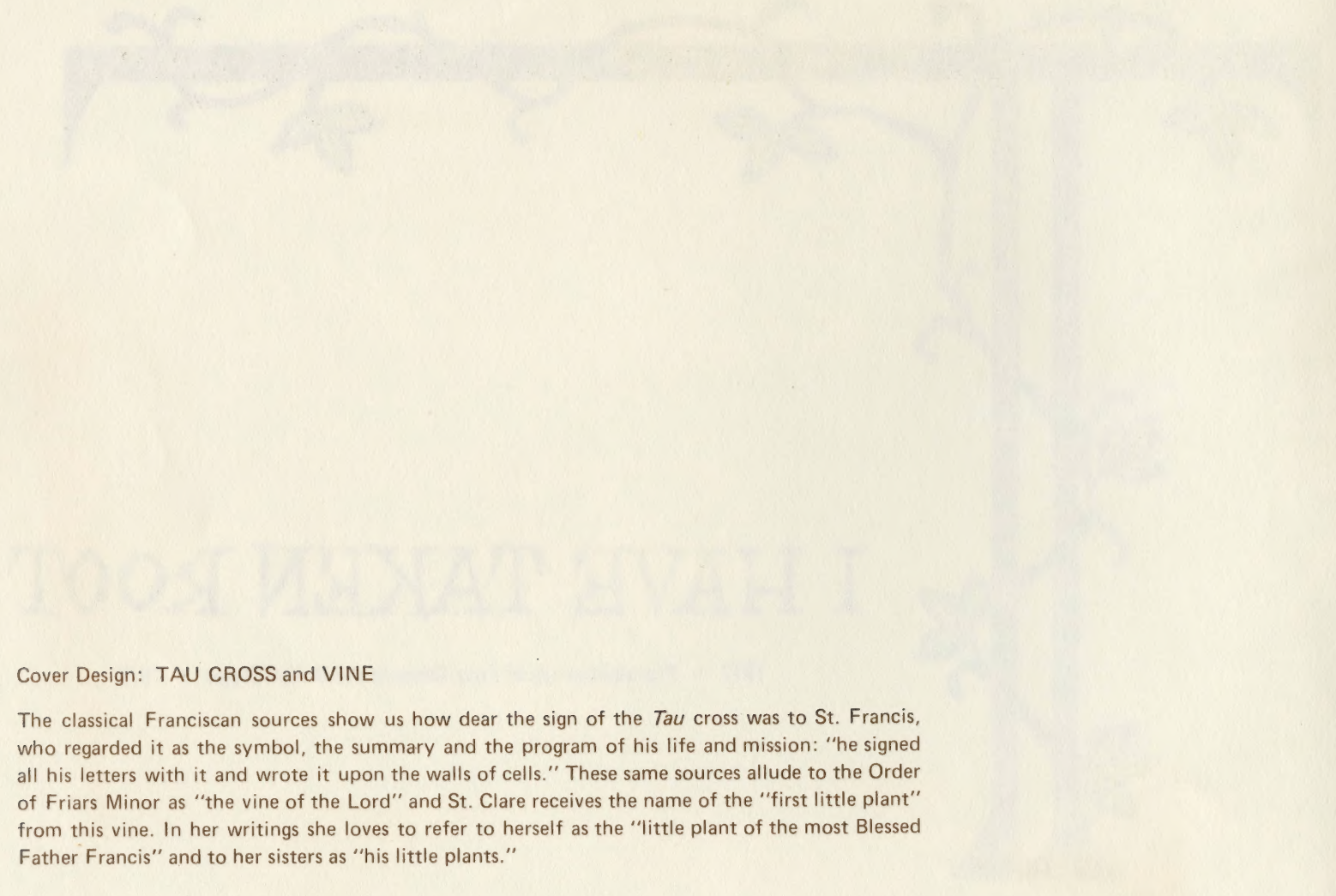


I HAVE TAKEN ROOT

1877 • Protomonastery of Poor Clares in the United States • 1977



Cover Design: TAU CROSS and VINE

The classical Franciscan sources show us how dear the sign of the *Tau* cross was to St. Francis, who regarded it as the symbol, the summary and the program of his life and mission: "he signed all his letters with it and wrote it upon the walls of cells." These same sources allude to the Order of Friars Minor as "the vine of the Lord" and St. Clare receives the name of the "first little plant" from this vine. In her writings she loves to refer to herself as the "little plant of the most Blessed Father Francis" and to her sisters as "his little plants."

I HAVE TAKEN ROOT

1877 • Protomonastery of Poor Clares in the United States • 1977

"This gives me great joy in the Lord and I am lifted up by it."

St. Clare

MONASTERY OF POOR CLARES
3501 ROCKY RIVER DRIVE
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44111

Jesus said to his disciples: "Live on in me, as I do in you.
No more than a branch can bear fruit of itself apart from the vine,
can you bear fruit apart from me.
I am the vine, you are the branches.
He who lives in me and I in him, will produce abundantly,
for apart from me you can do nothing.
A man who does not live in me is like a withered, rejected branch,
picked up to be thrown in the fire and burnt.
If you live in me, and my words stay part of you
you may ask what you will — it will be done for you.
My Father has been glorified in your bearing much fruit
and becoming my disciples.
As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.
Live on in my love.
You will live in my love if you keep my commandments,
even as I have kept my Father's commandments,
and live in his love."

Gospel for the feast of St. Clare

"I have taken root in a privileged people
in the Lord's property, in his inheritance."

Si. 24

This booklet is dedicated to
the Most Reverend James A. Hickey, Bishop of Cleveland,
the people of God of this diocese
and the entire civic community.

You have been to us what the earth is to the plant,
providing us with a place to be and to grow,
with nourishment and environment
and with the protection we need
to flourish in this life.

We join Our Lady in saying,
"I have taken root in a privileged people,
in the Lord's property, in his inheritance."
May the Poor Clare portion of the Vine,
which you so generously foster and protect,
bear much fruit in holiness
for your welfare and that of all God's people.

The Poor Clare Nuns of Cleveland
Rocky River Drive

On bended knees, humble in mind
and submissive in spirit, I commend
all my Sisters, present and to come,
to our Holy Mother, the Roman
Church, and to the Supreme
Pontiff . . . For this is the little
flock which the Lord and Father
has begotten in His Holy Church
by the word and example of the
Blessed Father Francis, who fol-
lowed the poverty and humility of
His beloved Son and of the glorious
Virgin, His Mother.

Testament of St. Clare





UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

3339 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

March 31, 1977

Dear Mother Amata Rose:

On the joyous occasion of the Centenary of the Founding of the Poor Clare Monastery of Cleveland, Ohio, and the Fiftieth Anniversary of Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in your chapel, it gives me great pleasure to inform you that our most Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, graciously bestows his Apostolic Benediction upon you, all the Sisters of the Monastery, the Clergy, the friends and benefactors of the Monastery, and upon all who join with you in observing this happy event, August 11, 1977.

Much loving prayer and service, supported by penance, have given honor and glory to God during these past 100 years, not only in this monastery, but in your daughter monasteries as well. God has been your helper and your strength through all these years. For this reason I join with you in joyfully thanking God for all His past blessings.

In the years to come, may the Sisters of the Poor Clare Monastery continue to grow as a faith community, centered in Jesus Christ Who says, "This is My Body," and again, "I am the Life of the world."

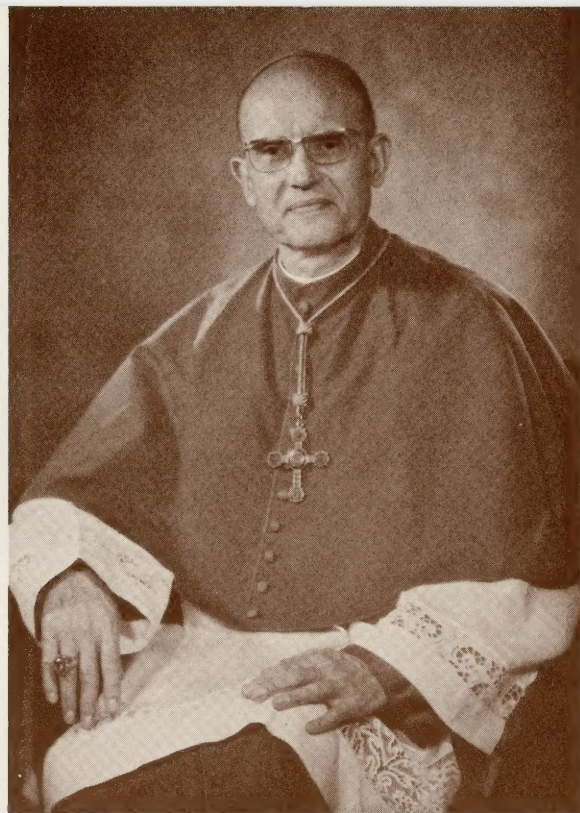
To this Blessing of the Holy Father, I wish to add my personal greetings and prayerful good wishes. With sentiments of esteem and renewed felicitations, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Jean Tadot

Apostolic Delegate

Mother Amata Rose, P.C.C.
Abbess: Monastery of the Poor Clares
Cleveland, Ohio





THE CHANCERY
DIOCESE OF CLEVELAND
CHANCERY BUILDING, CATHEDRAL SQUARE
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44114

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

April 18, 1977

Mother Amata Rose and Sisters
Monastery of the Poor Clares
3501 Rocky River Drive
Cleveland, Ohio 44111

My dear Mother Amata Rose and Sisters,

It is a distinct privilege and a pleasure for me to offer my sincere congratulations, and indeed the congratulations of the entire Diocese, as you celebrate the Centennial of your foundation in Cleveland. I give thanks to Almighty God for these one hundred years of dedicated prayerful service to the Church in Cleveland and in America.

History does not record for us the countless faithful whose lives have been enriched by your presence among us since that December day in 1877 when five Colettine Poor Clares arrived in Cleveland after a stormy voyage across the Atlantic from Holland.

If growth is a sign of God's blessing, and I believe it is, surely the nine monasteries established throughout the United States from this first foundation in America give evidence of God's special love. "Great indeed is the goodness of the Lord!"

As a mark of esteem for the contemplative vocation and as a remembrance of the dedicated century of your service in Cleveland, I plan to name a parish, soon to be established, in honor of St. Colette, your "second foundress." I ask that this new community of faith, worship and service have a special place in your prayers.

As you move into your second century, I pray that your lives marked by special poverty, willing penance and constant prayer will call many others to follow "with light step and unstumbling feet."

I send you my special blessing in the words of your mother, Saint Clare... "I beseech our Lord Jesus Christ through His mercy and through the intercession of His holy Mother Mary, of the holy archangel Saint Michael, and of all the Saints of God, of our blessed Father Francis and all the holy men and women, Saints of God, that the Heavenly Father give and confirm to thee this His most holy blessing in heaven and on earth. On earth may He increase thee in grace and in His virtues among all His servants and handmaids of His Church militant, in heaven may He exalt and glorify thee in His Church triumphant, in the assembly of His Saints."

Sincerely in Christ,

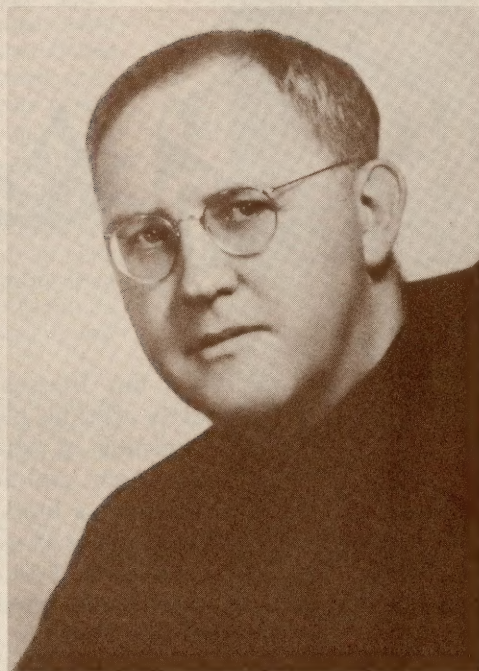
James A. Hickey
(Most Reverend) James A. Hickey
Bishop of Cleveland



Very Reverend Vitus Duschinsky, O.F.M.
Minister Provincial
of the Province of the Sacred Heart

The Lord gave us our most Blessed Father Francis to be our founder, gardener and helper in the service of Christ. In his lifetime he was ever solicitous to cultivate and tend, both by word and example, us who are his little plants. Thus I also commend my Sisters, both present and to come, to the successor of our Blessed Father Francis and to his entire Order that they may always assist us to advance more securely in the service of God and, above all, to observe most holy poverty in a more perfect way.

Testament of St. Clare



To Mother Amata Rose and to all the Sisters on the joyful celebration of the centennial

1877 - August 11th - 1977

of the founding of the Cleveland Monastery, proto-monastery of Poor Clares in the U.S.A., I gladly impart the Seraphic Blessing.

Rome April 1, 1977.



*F. Bernard Klau O.F.M.
Min. gl.*



When our Blessed Father Francis as yet had neither Friars nor companions and, shortly after his conversion, was repairing the church of San Damiano, he prophesied concerning us what the Lord later fulfilled. For after having mounted the wall of this church, and addressed himself to some poor folk of the neighborhood, he said to them in a loud voice in French, "Come, help me to build the monastery of San Damiano, for it will be the dwelling of Ladies whose fame and holy life will glorify the Heavenly Father throughout His Holy Church." We can behold in this, therefore, the immense goodness of God toward us. For it is through the superabundance of His mercy and of His love that He deigned to have His saint speak thus of our vocation and election. And it was not of us alone that our Blessed Father prophesied these things, but of others also who were to follow us in this holy vocation to which the Lord has called us . . .

Testament of St. Clare

Nearly eight hundred years ago in the heart of young Francis Bernardone of Assisi, Jesus, the true vine Himself, carefully planted a tender new shoot, a gift of His heart and vibrant with His life. The soil was well-chosen; the shoot took hold. The vocation of Francis was sealed. Called to follow the Great King, he joyfully sang: "My God and my All!" Eager hearts listened, soon other tiny shoots caught hold and growth began with strength and vigor drawn from the parent vine. Thus did the Franciscan Order originate and the vine continued to grow, branching out far beyond the loamy Umbrian valley.

Perhaps no one heard that humble song of Francis more clearly than young Clare Offreduccio of Assisi. She, before all others, recognized the melody. Her heart caught the notes and absorbed them wholly. Into the fertile soil of her heart Francis transplanted the tenderest shoot of his vine, growing as it did from the heart of Christ. Clare loved to call herself his "little plant." She breathed life into his hopes and ideals and fruitfully brought them forth in her own life. Faithful Clare! So faithful to Francis; utterly faithful to Christ! Francis who reflected the image of Christ was in turn reflected in the shining brightness and clarity that was the soul of Clare.

On the night of Palm Sunday, March 18, 1212, Francis and his first friars gave the habit of poverty to Clare in the tiny chapel of St. Mary of the Angels outside the city of Assisi. And thus did our Order begin, the Poor Ladies, first fruits of succeeding generations of like-minded *poverelle* who follow Christ, forever radiant in Francis and Clare.

Vines when carefully planted and tended will flourish in many different kinds of soil. The initial growth of the Franciscan Order could not be contained within Assisi. The friars carried their glad tidings afar, traveling barefoot and poor throughout Italy and soon beyond its borders. "Go forth, dearest brothers, two by two, and preach the gospel to all the world," spoke Francis to his sons. Clare and her daughters enclosed in San Damiano might have expected its walls to shelter the nucleus of their spiritual apostolate. But the fragrance of their holy living permeated Umbria, and it inspired in many young women a desire to give themselves completely to God in the joyful abandonment of utter poverty, being spiritual helpers to their preaching, mendicant brothers. Though hidden from view, convents of Poor Ladies sprang up all over Italy and beyond, approximately one hundred and twenty of them during the lifetime of our Blessed Mother Clare.

The "Privilege of Poverty," that purest expression of the Blessed Father Francis' ideal cherished by Clare, was the inheritance she left her sisters. The papal document of approval for her Rule which assured that privilege arrived only days before Clare was born to eternal life.

However, rapid expansion of the Order and well-meant insistences of fatherly Pontiffs prevented the strictest form of poverty from being common to all monasteries of Poor Ladies, with the result



St. Francis of Assisi



St. Clare of Assisi

St. Colette of Corbie



that many of the sisters could observe only a mitigated form of St. Clare's high ideals. Together with this, the passage of time and human frailty were factors contributing to a lessening of the original fervor that characterized the Order's bright dawning. But perhaps it had to be so in the wake of the impact Francis and Clare had upon the world of their time and upon all of history and, also, that God's abiding assistance might be made even more manifest. For He Himself had assured Clare and her sisters: "I will always protect you."

That protective care took on a new dimension in the fifteenth century with the calling of St. Colette, a young recluse in the town of Corbie in France. To Colette Boellet, God's will that she begin a reform of the Order of St. Clare became known in a dream in which she saw both Francis and Clare pleading with God that she be chosen for this task. How could she refuse so sacred, even though demanding, an election? Receiving official appointment, Colette began to establish monasteries of St. Clare to whose Rule she added Constitutions of her own. Her reform spread throughout Belgium and France. At her death in 1449 many houses of Colettine Poor Clares existed, forerunners of those yet to be.

One of the communities St. Colette founded was that in Ghent, Belgium in 1442. This community in 1845 made a foundation in Tongres, Belgium, which in turn established a daughter house in Dusseldorf, Germany in 1859. It was from this latter house that new shoots of that precious Assisian vine were transplanted to the fresh soil of America. Exiles of the German Kulturkampf, five sisters from the Dusseldorf community, Sister M. Josepha Mungen, Sister M. Hyacinth Weber, Sister M. Theresa Huechtker, Sister M. Veronica von Elmendorff and Sister Margaret Mary Wickern, embarked for the New World in November of 1877.

Father Gregory Jancknecht, O.F.M., Provincial of the Holy Cross Province in Germany and founder of the Sacred Heart Province of Franciscan Friars here in the United States, had personally invited the sisters to come to this country and, with the able assistance of Father Kilian Schloesser, O.F.M., pastor and guardian of St. Joseph Church, obtained permission for them to settle in Cleveland from the Right Reverend Richard Gilmour, Cleveland's second Bishop.

The five Colettine Poor Clares sailed on the ocean liner "Caland," docking at Hoboken, New Jersey on December 13, 1877. They were hospitably welcomed by two German Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, a congregation founded by Blessed Mary Frances Schervier, who had been a close friend of Mother Marie, the abbess in Dusseldorf. Early in the crisp, still dark morning of Saturday, December 15, 1877, the five Poor Clares arrived in Cleveland. A Franciscan brother met them and took them to St. Joseph Church on Woodland Avenue where Father Gregory and Father Kilian awaited them. These Fathers wanted to personally escort the sisters to 1116 Broadway, their new monastery.

In June of that year Father Kilian had purchased the building located at the corner of Broadway and McBride Street from a Mr. Buettner to be used for the Poor Clares. This exact location has now been absorbed by the St. Alexis Hospital complex. Both the provincial and the guardian



Rev. Kilian Schloesser, O.F.M.



Monastery of Poor Clares, Dusseldorf, Germany



Very Rev. Gregory Jancknecht, O.F.M.



**Right Reverend
Richard Gilmour,
second Bishop
of Cleveland**

themselves assisted the Franciscan brothers in cleaning and preparing the eight-room dwelling which had formerly been a public school and then a family home. The friars adapted the building to the life of the Poor Clares who were to come, adding the meager furnishings, straw mattresses and utensils they would need. In true brotherly fashion, they even planted a garden of spinach and other vegetables.

It was on August 9, 1877 that the first Poor Clares had set foot in Cleveland. As early as 1875 Mother Mary Maddalena and Mother Mary Constance, daughters of the noble family of Bentivoglio and nuns of the monastery of San Lorenzo in Rome, with the blessing of the reigning Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, had come to the United States to establish a foundation of the Second Order. After learning of the many difficulties encountered in their efforts to found a community, Father Gregory, who had been entrusted with the care of the two Italian Poor Clares, advised the sisters to come to Cleveland. It was Mother Maddalena and Mother Constance who welcomed our German foundresses that mid-December day.

How warmly received the sisters must have felt, how much fraternal love and support they must have sensed as the two friar-priests led them at ten o'clock that morning to their new home where they received the sisterly embraces of Mother Maddalena and Mother Constance. The circumstances of their beginning must have been reminiscent of St. Francis and his friars conducting St. Clare to the little convent of San Damiano.

The two groups of sisters formed a community of mutual affection and esteem as Father Gregory had hoped, yet the differences of language, culture, customs and climate proved difficult and a separation seemed desirable. Mother Maddalena and Mother Constance left Cleveland in February, 1878 and after several months' begging tour arrived in Omaha, Nebraska on August 15. In Omaha our sister-community took root and eventually flowered into twenty monasteries.

On February 28, 1878 Bishop Gilmour came to visit the Poor Clares for the first time. Following his visit, the very first Forty Hours devotion was held on March 3, 4 and 5, the three days preceding Ash Wednesday of that year. Later that month on the feast of St. Joseph and again on April 16, the anniversary of the day St. Francis made his holy vows, the sisters had exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament. These first moments of Eucharistic adoration in the little house on Broadway were happy preludes to the great graces that were to come with regard to exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. In accord with ancient Poor Clare tradition, from the very beginning of our community's existence in Cleveland adoration of our Lord in the Eucharist was fostered. He has been the center of our lives as centuries ago He was the center around which the lives of St. Clare and our first sisters were entwined. "Praise the Lord, my little daughters, for heaven and earth cannot repay the great blessing Christ has deigned this day to give me. For today I have received the Most High Himself . . .," sang Clare in supernatural joy.



Monastery of Poor Clares on Broadway

His Presence must surely have encouraged the brave little band of five in those initial months of adjustment to a completely different environment. On March 12 Mother M. Veronica was appointed abbess by Father Gregory who was her higher superior at that time. Mother Veronica had entered the Poor Clare community at Dusseldorf at the age of twenty-three, was clothed as a novice on June 23, 1869 and made perpetual profession on July 8 of the following year. She alone of the sisters knew a little of the English language. The sisters had much to suffer, both from the effects of the language barrier and the very real poverty they experienced. And yet, surely their hearts were uplifted by a deep peace and spiritual gladness for they knew they were living as Clare would have them live. Our Holy Mother Clare had instructed her daughters: "If it should ever happen that the sisters leave this place and go elsewhere, they are bound, wherever they be after my death, to observe the manner of poverty which we have promised God and our most Blessed Father Francis."

To the indomitable Sister Margaret Mary, the community's only extern sister, fell the task of begging food and alms for her sisters. Young, alone and unfamiliar with the language, this was a difficult undertaking. Even today people are not able to understand the value of contemplative Orders; some, at that time, undoubtedly felt the cloister to be useless in the face of the American Church's growing humanitarian and social concerns. Many times Sister faced an uncomprehending public, and many times did she return home weary, empty-handed and suffering much from inclement weather. The sisters accepted hunger quite as gratefully as they accepted donations when given. The common need must have bound their hearts together even more tenderly in sisterly love.

Precious letters which Sister Margaret Mary sent to her family in Germany have left us a delightful picture of a gradually increasing familiarity of the community with its surroundings. Sister speaks of the Franciscan Fathers devotedly coming to say Mass at the convent, riding in sleighs in the wintertime. She tells of teaching two little Polish boys of the neighborhood how to serve Mass and say the Latin responses, and of having the children of the Buettner family accompany her on begging trips. Very special mention was made of a Mrs. Kusckeka who brought milk to the sisters, and probably at no small sacrifice.

The tender shoot of the Assisian vine was taking hold in America; its roots were sinking deep into Cleveland soil. Within less than a year, young Mary Murray entered the cloister and Anna Hoel became an extern sister. Both Americans, Mary became Sister M. Gregoria, no doubt in recognition of and in gratitude to Father Gregory whose fatherly solicitude helped establish the Cleveland foundation, and Anna became Sister M. Clare, her presence greatly lightening the linguistic burdens of Sister Margaret Mary. Sister Gregoria and Sister Clare were professed together on September 26, 1880.



**Rev. Mother M. Veronica von Elmendorff,
our beloved foundress**



Monastery of Poor Clares on Perry Street
Tower cross now standing in cloister cemetery, Rocky River Drive (upper right)

God continued to bless the young community with new members and soon the eight-room house on Broadway became inadequate. The ever-devoted Father Kilian assisted the new Provincial of the Sacred Heart Province, Very Reverend Vincent Halbfas, O.F.M., in looking for another building. At 246 Perry Street (the present-day East 22nd Street), there stood a three-story brick building of severe architecture right next to St. Bridget Church. With alterations and a small addition it seemed a suitable dwelling for the Clares, so the property was purchased on December 1, 1880 and the changes begun.

Before the work was completed and the new monastery ready for occupancy, the growing community on Broadway was struck by an epidemic of typhoid fever. The time of pruning the vine had come, but only that it might bear still more fruit. Precious offerings were gathered up as in harvest by the Vinedresser, firstfruits of lives wholly given to God. Postulant Catherine Reis, only twenty-two years old, died Sunday morning, October 9, 1881. Sister Theresa, Sister Hyacinth and Sister Gregoria each contracted the dread disease that same month. In his concern Father Kilian asked Mother M. Austin, superior of the Ursuline Nuns, if they might give temporary shelter to the Poor Clares who had not been stricken. Mother Austin and her sisters graciously received Mother Josepha, the vicarress, and four other sisters, putting rooms at their disposal and arranging that they might continue to observe their regular life undisturbed. Meanwhile, Mother Veronica and extern Sisters Margaret Mary, Clare and Crescentia, who had come from Dusseldorf in 1878, remained on Broadway to care for the sick. Father Kilian was so thoughtful as to request one or two of the Franciscan Sisters in Cincinnati to come and help nurse the ill. Three members of that community were immediately dispatched by their generous provincial, Sister Vincentia, who would have come herself had not official duties prevented her. These three sisters, observing the poverty of the Poor Clares, wrote with touching charity to their own motherhouse for necessities for the ill and received an immediate sisterly response. On Friday, October 21, Sister Theresa Huechtker, one of the original group from Germany, died peacefully in the presence of the sisters and Father Eustace Brueggemann, confessor of the community. After taking a turn for the worse, Sister Hyacinth's condition improved and eventually she and Sister Gregoria both recovered.

The community came through the crisis realizing that the suffering would indeed bear fruit, fruit that would last. The growing branch had held fast, remaining on the Vine from which it drew its strength, and the words of Jesus would be fulfilled in it: it would bear fruit in plenty. Bonds were forged at the time of this ordeal which would also last, bonds of true sisterliness, and the Franciscan Sisters, the Ursuline Nuns and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd are forever enshrined in the history of our community.

On December 23 of that same year, 1881, the sisters began the move to the now complete monastery on Perry Street. A cross had been added to the tower (that same cross now stands in our cloister cemetery on Rocky River Drive) and the convent was dedicated to Our Lady of the



Rev. Mother M. Josepha Mungen



**Sr. M. Coletta, Sr. M. Theresa,
Sr. Mary of the Seven Dolors,
Sr. Margaret Mary at Perry Street monastery**



Rev. Mother M. Theresa Stelkens

Angels. The sisters completed the moving process in time to pray Christmas Matins and Lauds at midnight. On Christmas morning they awakened to life in their new home, experiencing the same joy and peace in their poverty that they had known in their former home. They had passed through much suffering, but it served only to strengthen them and unite them still more closely. The Perry Street convent was within walking distance of the Franciscan friary at St. Joseph's on what is now East 23rd Street. Gradually the sisters became better known to Cleveland residents for whom they prayed. The circle of their gratitude widened to include the new friends God sent them in their needs, Mr. F.E.Cudell, architect, and Mr. Joseph Hackmann, contractor, who had seen to the building alterations gratis and, of course, the ever-devoted friars who had done so much to prepare this home for them.

Again God blessed their growth so that in 1885 the community numbered twenty members including four extern sisters. The vine grew and flourished till it was laden with fruit, the fruit of love and sacrifice. Divine Providence led Sister Clare and Sister Francis, two of the extern sisters, to Chicago to beg alms for the Cleveland community with the blessing of Archbishop Patrick Feehan of Chicago. In the three months they spent there their joyous and virtuous examples not only brought the alms they sought but also inspired vocations. Dear Mrs. Bohlig of St. Augustine Parish, extending the warmth of her home's hospitality to the sisters, knew the joy of seeing her own seventeen-year-old daughter Mary join them. Not long after Mary came, some of her sodality friends and companions followed her. The Cleveland community rejoiced in the vocations of Sister M. Coletta (Mary) Bohlig, Sister M. Anthony Klein, Sister Mary of the Seven Dolors Jacobs, Sister M. Joseph Eichorst and Sister M. Bernadine Hartman. To these graces God added the planting of the seed for a future foundation in Chicago.

In time Sister Coletta became for many a living legend in Cleveland, and many are the hearts that cherish a memory of this good and spirited little extern sister. She so fostered devotion to her sainted patroness' special prerogative of watching over expectant mothers, that many were the children named after our Mother St. Colette. In her own precious handwriting of her last years, we treasure the account of Sister Coletta's entrance on August 11, 1885 after having made the decision to leave her family home in Chicago and return with the Cleveland sisters to the Perry Street monastery. How she cherished the genuine poverty she encountered there; how lovingly she labored for her community after receiving the holy habit just two months later on October 23, 1885. Sister Coletta's life proclaimed in deeds the prayerful exhortation of St. Colette: "Let us always regret that we have but one heart with which to love God, and that this heart is so poor and weak. But such as it is, God asks it of us. Let us give it to Him constantly and completely. Let Him have this poor heart for time and eternity."

The growth in numbers with which God blessed the community continued and the now sturdy plant rooted in Cleveland began to put out shoots of its own. When Archbishop Feehan learned

that the Poor Clares in Cleveland were looking westward with the hope of establishing a monastery in his archdiocese, he gave his approval, knowing that a community devoted to prayer and penance would serve as a counterbalance in the city of Chicago which was the adolescent genius of the Middle West. An austere monastic building was constructed in 1893 amidst a waste of muddy prairie for Mother Veronica, Mother Josepha and six other pioneers. This eldest daughter of the Cleveland community flourished under the gentle hand of the Divine Gardener. In 1948 a little transplant was firmly fixed in the soil of Roswell, New Mexico and in 1959 another in Kokomo, Indiana.

Even with the departure of eight of their sisters for Chicago, it became necessary for the Cleveland community to consider still another move to a larger building. Mother M. Theresa Stelkens, abbess at that time, obtained a decree of erection from Pope St. Pius X in January of 1905 and our present monastery on Rocky River Drive was begun. Its basic building plan was modeled on that drawn up for a permanent foundation of the Dusseldorf community in Holland. This Dutch foundation was never realized, but the building plan was almost ideal for the Cleveland community. Brother Leonard Darscheid, O.F.M., architect of the Sacred Heart Province, was sent to Cleveland by the Very Reverend Hugolinus Storff, O.F.M., Minister Provincial, to advise and direct the construction of the new building. By February of 1906 our present building, a result of the excellent craftsman-



Rocky River Drive monastery, 1906



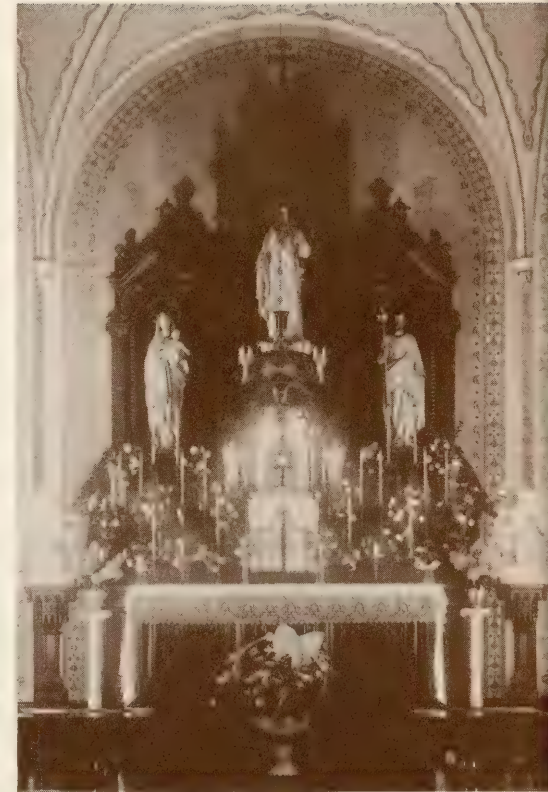


ship of Mr. Henry Terwoord, mason, Mr. John B. Hess, carpenter, and other fine workmen, was completed and ready for occupancy.

Again, the sisters moved. They had been slightly more than twenty-four years on Perry Street. The very first Mass was celebrated in the "West Park" monastery on February 18, 1906. Right Reverend Ignatius Horstmann came on June 14 of that year to solemnly dedicate our new home. In 1898 the Sisters of St. Joseph had preceded us to Rocky River Drive, then an unpaved road called Riverside Avenue; and good Mr. Terwoord had helped build their motherhouse which would later house one of his own daughters. Not long after the arrival of the Poor Clares, the Franciscan Friars came to complete the triad of religious communities in this area, a triad of mutual respect and loving support for more than seventy years.

The Poor Clare vine continued to spread as did the entire Church in America. The Rockford, Illinois diocese was established in 1908 and its first Bishop, Right Reverend Peter James Muldoon, repeatedly asked Mother Theresa for sisters to begin a community of Poor Clares in his diocese. In 1916 six sisters answered the Bishop's call and a new monastery was dedicated under the title of "Corpus Christi." In 1921 the first "little plants" were rooted in the fresh and fertile area of the California Missions. Following Father Hugolinus' inspiration Mother Theresa and four companions founded a new "San Damiano" under the patronage of St. Joseph in Oakland. This community later moved to Aptos, California but not before it had put forth its own shoots at Santa Barbara, California in 1928 and at Los Altos Hills, California in 1950.

As early as 1887, even though the Blessed Sacrament was not exposed, Mother Veronica initiated the custom of having the sisters by turn keep continuous private adoration before the tabernacle both night and day. This custom became a solemn privilege and obligation in 1927 when permission was granted by the Holy See for Perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in our chapel. This privilege of adoration is one we share with all those who avail themselves of



above: altar in public chapel prior to 1932
upper left: altar and chapel in the cloister

His Presence in our public chapel as well as those whom we bring into His Presence by our prayer. His Excellency, Most Reverend Joseph Schrembs, in approving the perpetual exposition enjoined upon the community the duty of praying for the priests and religious of the Diocese of Cleveland during the night hours of adoration, a duty dear to our hearts.

With Perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, more appropriate arrangements were necessary in the public and cloistered sections of the chapel. New marble altars, all gifts of generous benefactors, replaced the original ones in 1932. Two years later the Guild of Perpetual Adoration was formed by Father Louis Johantges, O.F.M., and affiliated with the Archconfraternity of the Blessed Sacrament in Chicago. During these same years Bishop Schrembs entrusted our community to the benevolent charity of the Catholic Daughters of America, Court Lakewood, who through an annual fund-raising card party still assist us.

The 1940's flowed into the Holy Year. The simple, hidden life of Clare of Assisi had not ceased to attract vibrant, young hearts, and the door of the cloister opened quite often during that year of grace to admit postulants into the enclosure. This new growth followed the community's faith response to Most Reverend Anselmo Pietrulla, O.F.M., who requested nuns who would open a house of Perpetual Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in his newly created diocese of Campina Grande in the State of Paraiba, Brazil. Seven sisters with missionary hearts said a courageous "yes" to the call for volunteers and under the watchful eye of another young Franciscan missionary, Father Jude Prost, now auxiliary bishop of Belem, Brazil, our "transplants" embraced many of the conditions that our own foundresses experienced: a new language, culture and climate, a fundamental poverty and eventually the joy of native vocations. The mother plant received more healthy new grafts especially during the Marian Year of 1954. In 1956 a fresh cutting could be made again and seven sisters left Cleveland for Warwick, now Newport News, Virginia to sink roots in the diocese of Richmond at the request of Most Reverend Peter L. Ireton.

In 1958 our community and others founded directly or indirectly from our Cleveland monastery responded to the challenge and invitation of Pope Pius XII that nuns of a common tradition form themselves into federations or groups of monasteries for mutual assistance and inspiration in living our cloistered contemplative vocation. The first federation meetings of abbesses and delegates from our member monasteries were held in our Cleveland protomonastery in 1958, 1962 and 1965.

The Master Gardener has lavished tender care on the tiny shoot which caught hold in American soil in 1877. Each day, silently and unobtrusively, history is being made in and through each one of the "little plants" in our Cleveland community which another age will record. The large events capture our interest; the small events, legion in number, pass almost unnoticed. Events of the Spirit, entrances, investitures, professions, jubilees and deaths in our monastic family are virtually unknown without, but nonetheless real, fruits of the Spirit, ripened fruits clinging to the Vine that is Christ.



foundng Sisters, Campina Grande, Brazil
upper right: monastery under construction, 1950

In this, our centenary year, the vine continues to blossom and bear fruit, to reach out in a unity of shared vision and dedication through the heritage that is our Poor Clare vocation. Even as this is being written a small Poor Clare shoot is being placed in the receptive soil of the Arlington diocese as six sisters from our Roswell monastery form the founding group for a community to take root in Alexandria, Virginia. In our own diocese, too, the vine of our community reaches out in spiritual support of the new parish of St. Colette. This faith community, lovingly entrusted to our prayerful solicitude by our dear Bishop Hickey in commemoration of our community's hundredth anniversary of foundation, will be not only a vivid reminder of our mutual support in the Mystical Body but also of the place of a hidden life of prayer in the heart of the Church of Cleveland.

Under the guidance of the Spirit we have been led to follow St. Clare, faithful daughter of the Church. In this age of renewal, as in every age, Poor Clares take breviary in hand and, in the name of the Church, join with heaven and earth to chant God's praises and plead His mercy. Sweetly did Blessed Clare sing praise to Him; may she teach us that song which she learned from the seraphic Francis.

We look to our model as daily we see Clare responding to the vocation Francis called forth in her. We hear her invite us to "be sure of step and joyful of heart and quick in response." Our Mother St. Colette ever urges us, as was her special divine calling, to listen to the clear voice of Clare saying to her chosen daughters: "But I must say this one thing because only one thing is necessary . . . by the love of Him to whom you have offered yourself as a holy and pleasing sacrifice,

statue of St. Clare on grounds



blessing of St. Clare's bread, 1975



sanctuary in public chapel



chapel in the cloister

Sisters chanting the
Liturgy of the Hours



that you be mindful of what you have set before you, and that in this you be like another Rachel. This will mean that you will not want to forget the point of your beginning, and that you will hold what you have, that you will do what you do, that you will not allow anything to grow slack . . ." (2nd letter of St. Clare to Bl. Agnes).

For all that the past has held, for all that the future will hold, for all that we hold today, the priceless Rule of our Mother St. Clare and the guiding influence of our Mother St. Colette, the great privilege of Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the awesome charge of prayerfully supporting the Church, the world, the diocese of Cleveland, its priests, religious and people, we are filled with gratitude to God and to you, our beloved families and friends. You have helped us with your faith, your prayers and your never-failing love and support. In fullest measure do we joyfully respond in prayer for you.

In his glad-hearted exuberance, the Herald of the Great King, our Blessed Father Francis sang praises to God, our Lord most High, our Almighty Good God. In this our centenary year we invite you to join with him, with St. Clare and with us, singing that same song in our hearts:

"Let us bless the Lord, the true and living God.
To Him let us accord praise, glory, honor,
blessing and all good things forever."

May this glad melody sound in heaven today; and in the hearts of those yet to be called to our holy vocation may it resound for hundreds and hundreds of years.

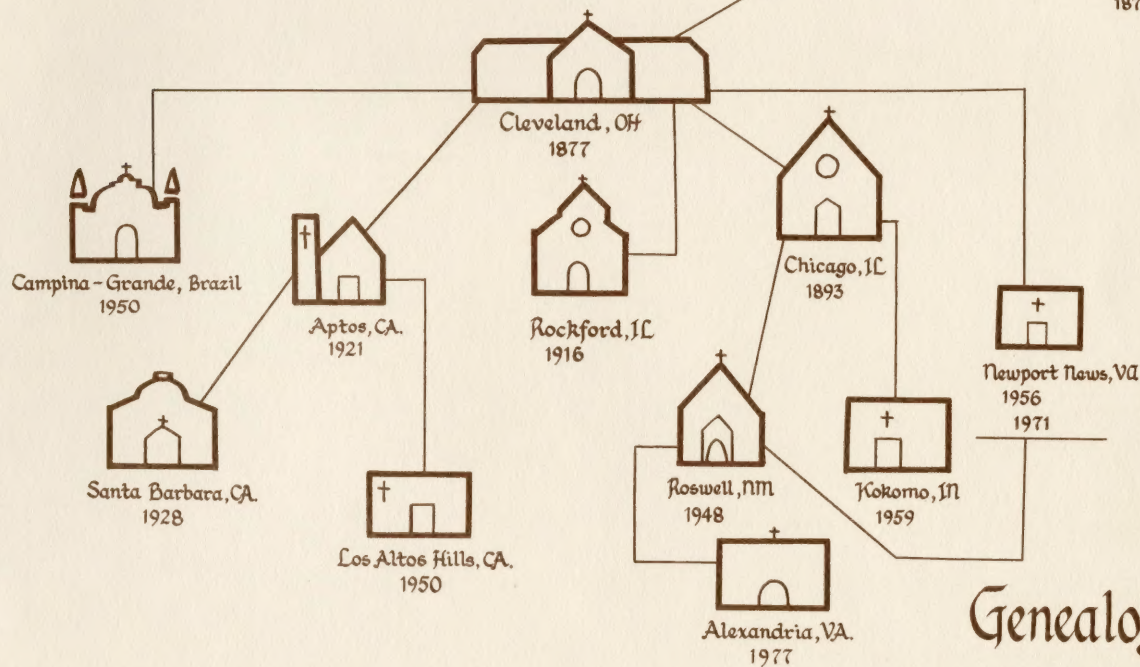
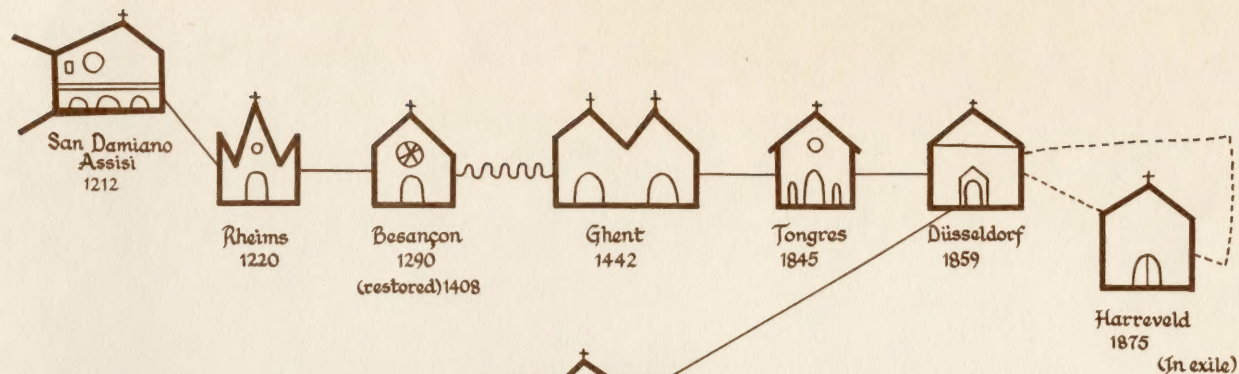
"Amen. Amen. So be it. So be it."







Fuller historical account in preparation.



Genealogy

